



MEDIA RELEASE

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32nd HUMANA FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN PLAYS ANNOUNCED Eleven World Premieres Set for 2008 Festival

LOUISVILLE, KY -The 32nd annual Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville will feature the work of a diverse array of 17 emerging and established playwrights, Marc Masterson, the company's artistic director announced today. The festival, slated for February 24 - March 30, is acclaimed worldwide as America's preeminent showcase of professional stage premieres.

This year's festival — comprised of six full-length plays, a bill of four ten-minute plays and a dramatic anthology — marks three decades of continuous support from its underwriter, The Humana Foundation. The philanthropic arm of Humana Inc., The Humana Foundation supports and nurtures charitable activities that promote healthy lives and healthy communities.

Full-length plays are *Great Falls* by Lee Blessing (New York City), *This Beautiful City* by Steven Cosson (New York City) and Jim Lewis (New York City), *Becky Shaw* by Gina Gionfriddo (New York City), *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom* by Jennifer Haley (Los Angeles), *the break/s* by Marc Bamuthi Joseph (Oakland, California) and *All Hail Hurricane Gordo* by Carly Mensch (New York City).

Ten-Minute plays are *Tongue, Tied* by M. Thomas Cooper (Portland, Oregon), *Dead Right* by Elaine Jarvik (Salt Lake City, Utah), *In Paris You Will Find Many Baguettes but Only One True Love* by Michael Lew (New York City) and *One Short Sleeper* by Naomi Wallace (native of Prospect, Kentucky residing in Skipton, North Yorkshire).

The dramatic anthology, *Game On*, is written by Zakiyyah Alexander (New York City), Rolin Jones (Los Angeles), Alice Tuan (Los Angeles), Daryl Watson (New York City), Marisa Wegrzyn (Chicago, Illinois) and Ken Weitzman (Atlanta, Georgia).

Descriptions of the festival's world premiere lineup, along with playwright biographies, are as follows:

FULL-LENGTH PLAYS

Great Falls
by Lee Blessing
directed by Lucie Tiberghien

A man lost in his adult life drives across the West with his stepdaughter—a young girl at the beginning of hers. The broken ground is echoed by their broken past. He's trying to fit together a new life using pieces of the old. She's just trying to survive.

Lee Blessing's plays at Actors include *Down the Road*, *Riches*, *Independence*, *Nice People Dancing to Good Country Music* and *Oldtimers Game*, plus various shorter pieces. His Broadway/off-Broadway plays include *A Walk in the Woods*, *Going to St. Ives*, *Thief River*, *Cobb*, *Two Rooms*, *Eleemosynary* and *A Body of Water* (at Primary Stages next fall).

This Beautiful City
by Steven Cosson and Jim Lewis
music and lyrics by Michael Friedman
from interviews by The Civilians

directed by Steven Cosson

The Civilians took a group of actors to Colorado Springs—the unofficial headquarters of Evangelical America—to learn firsthand about this growing movement. The resulting musical play explores a city where questions of religion and public life are brought to the surface in ways that range from the subtle to the dramatic, notably the explosive fall of Pastor Ted Haggard. Co-produced with The Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Steven Cosson is the founder of The Civilians, whose productions include the long-running hit *Gone Missing; (I Am) Nobody's Lunch; Canard, Canard, Goose?* and *Paris Commune*, all produced at theatres throughout the U.S. and U.K. including The Public Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville and American Repertory Theatre. Mr. Cosson has also directed numerous world premieres and classic plays.

Jim Lewis won Tony and Drama Desk Nominations for adapting Gabriel García Márquez' *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. He works regularly in theatre, dance and opera with such artists as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Graciela Daniele, Philip Glass, Bartlett Sher and Anna Deavere Smith. Mr. Lewis is currently writing *Fela!*, a new musical with Bill T. Jones.

Becky Shaw**by Gina Gionfriddo****directed by Peter DuBois****commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville**

A newlywed couple fixes up two romantically challenged friends: Wife's best friend, meet husband's sexy and strange new co-worker. When an evening calculated to bring happiness takes a dark turn, crisis and comedy ensue. This wickedly funny play asks what we owe the people we love and the strangers who land on our doorstep.

Gina Gionfriddo's play *After Ashley* premiered in the 2004 Humana Festival and was subsequently produced by The Vineyard Theatre in New York. She has received an Obie Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and her play *U.S. Drag* will be presented off-Broadway in February, 2008. Ms. Gionfriddo is a writer for the NBC series *Law & Order*.

Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom**by Jennifer Haley****directed by Kip Fagan**

In a suburban subdivision with identical houses, parents find their teenagers addicted to an online horror video game. The game setting? A subdivision with identical houses. The goal? Smash through an army of zombies to escape the neighborhood for good. But as the line blurs between virtual and reality, both parents and players realize that fear has a life of its own.

Jennifer Haley is a Los Angeles-based playwright whose plays include *S_Man*, *Dreampuffs of War* and *Gingerbreadhouse*. Her work has been seen at The Blue Theater in Austin, The Empty Space, Perishable Theatre and Abingdon Theatre Company. Ms. Haley holds an M.F.A. from Brown University and recently received a 2008 MacDowell Fellowship.

the break/s**by Marc Bamuthi Joseph****directed by Michael John Garcés**

With two turntables, live feed and a spoken word virtuoso, the living history of the hip-hop generation is dramatically realized through the performed personal narrative of poet Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Drawing on interviews and documentary footage, this collaboration between performer, score and projected image puts hip-hop culture into personal, historical and political perspective while exploding the boundaries of theater, dance and film.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a Stanford University IDA resident artist, HBO Def Poet, inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship and one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences as named by *Smithsonian Magazine*. His critical writing is currently featured in Jeff Chang's *Total Chaos*.

All Hail Hurricane Gordo**by Carly Mensch**

directed by Sean Daniels

The routines of daily life get blown apart when two brothers take in a plucky young houseguest. While India is running away from her relatively normal family, Chaz is struggling to find normalcy in the one he already has. Is it possible to be your brother's keeper and have a life too? Co-produced with The Cleveland Play House.

Carly Mensch is currently a fellow at The Juilliard School's Lila Acheson Wallace Playwrights Program and the playwright-in-residence at Ars Nova. Her play was developed at Ars Nova's Out Loud Series, the Kennedy Center's University Playwrights Workshop and Marin Theatre Company. Ms. Mensch is a graduate of Dartmouth College.

**BILL OF FOUR
TEN-MINUTE PLAYS*****Tongue, Tied*
by M. Thomas Cooper**

Plagued by malcontent sock puppets, two lost souls seek professional help. A zany and raucous exploration of accepting oddity—even if it's stuck to your hand.

M. Thomas Cooper has studied literature and theatre at Oregon State University, the University of Oregon and Portland State University. He's had a number of plays presented in conjunction with the Ashland 10-Minute Play Festival, Theatre in the Grove and Portland State University. His first novel, *42*, will be published in June, 2008.

***Dead Right*
by Elaine Jarvik**

A friend's flawed obituary propels Penny and her unwitting husband Bill headlong into prickly unanswered questions about their own lives. A touching comedy about who we are, how we see ourselves, and how we hope to be remembered.

Elaine Jarvik writes for *Deseret Morning News* in Salt Lake City. Among her many journalism awards are Best of the West and a Society of Professional Journalists national writing award. She is also co-founder of Senior Theatre Project, which takes plays to senior centers in Utah.

***In Paris You Will Find Many Baguettes but Only One True Love*
by Michael Lew**

Liz is looking for true love and Lindy is looking to fix her broken heart—so they head, of course, to Paris. When Liz finds the man of her dreams, Lindy faces a decision: can we just let our friends be happy? Advisory: This play contains a mime.

Michael Lew recently wrote a 24 Hour Play on Broadway. His play *Yit, Ngay (One, Two)* is published in *Plays and Playwrights 2006*. Upcoming publications include *The Roosevelt Cousins*, *Thoroughly Sauced* and *Magician Ben Vs. The Wizard Merlin*. Residencies include Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood, Ma-Yi Writers' Lab and Old Vic New Voices. Mr. Lew graduated from Yale College in 2003.

***One Short Sleeper*
by Naomi Wallace**

A young Lebanese student spins a web of connections between what he knew, what his sister saw, and the war that threatened them both.

Naomi Wallace's work has been produced in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. She has received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Kesselring Prize, Fellowship of Southern Writers Drama Award and an Obie Award. Ms. Wallace is also a recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship.

DRAMATIC ANTHOLOGY***Game On*
by Zakiyyah Alexander, Rolin Jones, Alice Tuan, Daryl Watson, Marisa Wegryzn and Ken Weitzman**

music and lyrics by Jon Spurney
directed by Will MacAdams

We're ready to play with guts and heart and rise to the challenge of examining American culture through the prism of sports. Sports touch all of our lives whether we are fans, players, tax- or tuition-payers. In this Olympic and election year, what do sports tell us about ourselves?

Zakiyyah Alexander's plays have been seen or developed throughout the country and in South Africa. She's a resident member of New Dramatists, The Dramatists Guild and Partial Comfort Productions and a graduate of Yale School of Drama (M.F.A. in Playwriting). Ms. Alexander is a native New Yorker and was raised in Brooklyn.

Rolin Jones' play *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow* received the 2006 Obie Award for Excellence in Playwriting and was a finalist for the 2006 Pulitzer Prize in Drama. His ten-minute play *Sovereignty* and *The Mercury and the Magic* and *Ron Bobbie Had Too Big a Heart* (part of *The Open Road Anthology*) were produced at Actors Theatre's Humana Festival. Mr. Jones is a writer/producer for Showtime's award-winning series *Weeds*.

Alice Tuan received emerging artist recognition from both Los Angeles' Richard E. Sherwood Award and the New York's Colbert Award for Excellence in 2000. Productions include *Ajax (por nobody)*, *Last of the Suns*, *Ikebana*, *Some Asians*, *New Culture for a New Country* and an adaptation of Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*. Latest plays include *Iggy Woo*, *HIT* and *P.O. Box*.

Daryl Watson is the author of *Prime Time*, *The Blueberry Hill Accord* (published by Vintage in *Laugh Lines: Short Comic Plays*) and *Snap* (Celebrity Judge Panel Award and Audience Favorite Award at the 2005 *Battle of the Bards*; published by Playscripts, Inc. in *Great Short Comedies: Vol I*). His television credits include *Johnny and the Sprites* (co-creator).

Marisa Wegrzyn's play *The Butcher of Baraboo* was produced in Steppenwolf Theatre Company's First Look Repertory and premiered off-Broadway at Second Stage. Ms. Wegrzyn is currently working on commissions from Steppenwolf Theatre Company and Yale Repertory Theatre. She is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists and a founding member of Theatre Seven in Chicago.

Ken Weitzman's work has been seen at Actors Theatre's 2007 Humana Festival, Atlantic Theater Company, New York Stage and Film, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Mark Taper Forum, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Bay Area Playwrights Festival and Dad's Garage. Awards include a 2003 Weissberger Award and commissions from Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage and South Coast Repertory. Mr. Weitzman holds an M.F.A. from University of California, San Diego and teaches playwriting at Emory University.

TICKETS

The festival plays will be presented in rotating repertory in Actors Theatre's 637-seat Pamela Brown Auditorium, 318-seat Bingham Theatre and 159-seat Victor Jory Theatre.

Two weekends featuring festival plays are slated for industry professionals. Theatre Professional Weekend (March 21 – 23) is for artistic directors, literary managers and playwrights. Press, producers, directors, casting agents from stage, film and television are invited to Special Visitors Weekend (March 28 – 30). For information contact Katherine Bilby at 502-584-1265.

New Play Getaway ticket packages, which offer discounts to multiple plays and to area hotels, are available for weekends in March. For getaway package information, call (502) 585-1210.

For information or reservations call (502) 584-1205 or 1-800-4-ATL-TIX, or visit Actors Theatre's website at www.actorstheatre.org.

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Editor: The involvement of The Humana Foundation in the Humana Festival of New American Plays is very important to us. We would greatly appreciate inclusion of its participation in your coverage.

About Actors Theatre of Louisville

Marc Masterson, Artistic Director
 Jennifer Bielstein, Managing Director

Now in its 44th season, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the State Theatre of Kentucky, has emerged as one of America's most consistently innovative professional theatre companies. For over 30 years, it has been a major force in revitalizing American playwriting. Its annual Humana Festival of New American Plays is recognized as the premiere event of its kind and draws producers, journalists, critics, playwrights and theatre lovers from around the world for a marathon of new works. Over 350 Humana Festival plays have been published, making them available to producers and readers, and creating a significant addition

to the nation's dramatic literature. Actors Theatre's programming includes a broad range of classical and contemporary work, presenting over 600 performances each season. The company performs annually to nearly 200,000 people and is the recipient of the most prestigious awards bestowed on a regional theatre: a special Tony Award for Distinguished Achievement, the James N. Vaughan Memorial Award for Exceptional Achievement and Contribution to the Development of Professional Theatre and the Margo Jones Award for the Encouragement of New Plays. Actors Theatre's international appearances include performances in over 29 cities in 15 foreign countries. Currently, there are 39 books of plays and criticism from Actors Theatre in publication and circulation.
